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AN IROQUOIS CONDOLENCE.

It was customary for the Indians of New York and Canada to revive their deceased warriors by having others take their names and stations, and captives were often chosen for this purpose. Among the Algonquins of Canada this involved the care of the family of the dead, and the laying aside of the former name. If the one who revived the memory of the departed took the office of a chief, the nation met to confer authority on him in the most solemn manner. Presents were made to him, and he made presents in return. All might be done without calling on any others.

With the Iroquois of New York it was somewhat different. The new chief had a new name, but it was an hereditary title, one which had been borne by a line of chiefs before him, if he was now made one of the fifty principal sachems who were successors of the first council. He might retain his former name if he chose, and commonly did so. His duties being official, he had no care for the family of his predecessor. Representing one of the Five Nations, he neither gave nor received personal presents at the time. The nation took care of these. It was the nation that mourned,—not the family; and with it mourned the brothers of its class. Grief incapacitated it for public business until the new chief was raised. If the bereavement came upon one of the Elder Brothers, the other Elder Brothers mourned with it, and the Younger Brothers came to comfort them; if the Younger Brothers mourned, the Elder Brothers became the comforters. They called the council, they took charge of the ceremonies, they instituted the new chief. As such, an Oneida could not raise an Oneida chief, nor an Onondaga an Onondaga. This must be done, not only by another nation, but by one of the opposite brotherhood. The Elder Brothers are the Mohawks, Onondagas, and Senecas; the Younger Brothers are the Cayugas and Oneidas, with the Tuscaroras added now.

I propose to give a brief account of a condolence which I recently witnessed, with its accompanying acts. A friend of mine, an old Oneida principal chief, had died, and the customary message had been sent out by the Onondagas, acting for the Elder Brothers. Properly the place of assembly should have been at the Oneida council-house, but they have none now in New York, and the Onondaga house and village were considered theirs for the occasion, that being the place where Ga-no-gwen-u-ton died. In a similar way some chiefs were lent. Rites and ceremonies seem natural to organized society, and the most barbarous nations may be the most punctilious. If the state of society continues much the same, the

rites may change little in hundreds of years, but internal progress or outside contact may affect them greatly, not so much in leading features as in minor details. The Iroquois condolence is thus like and unlike what it was nearly three centuries ago. For strings of colored sticks or quills, there is wampum; for the meeting outside the town, there is the gathering at a convenient distance from the council-house; the fire is kindled by the wayside still, but visitors and mourners sit on benches or chairs, not upon the ground. For savage dresses are substituted those of modern life; and the council-house is painted, has windows, stoves, and brick chimneys, to say nothing of other conveniences. A young man who was to replace the dead chief appeared in brand new store clothes, derby hat, and tan kid gloves.

The earliest account we have of an Iroquois condolence is of one held in 1670, after the Mohawks had lost several warriors in battle. Father Pierron called it a ceremony of the dead, but it had nothing to do with any burial, and he said he could not understand a word of the songs. It lasted several hours, but was held outside of the town, and had other features not found in the present ceremony. The condolence now always includes the raising of the new chief. In early days it did not. The separation of the mourning nations from the others seems to have been always a feature. They had no voice to speak, no voice in the council until the grave was covered, and their tears wiped away. To use their own expression, their council-fire was extinguished for the time. Usually, too, the condolence took place at the village of the mourning nation, where they awaited the comforting visit of their friends.

When chiefs of importance die, notice is sent to other nations, always by one of the opposite brotherhood, who bears purple wampum as his token of authority. This is arranged in a single string, with the ends brought together, if it is a war chief; three strings, with the ends free, if it is a principal chief. Entering the village and drawing near the chief's house, he cries Kwā; once for a war chief, three times for a principal chief. The same cry often announces a death in the village where it occurs, something like our old rural custom of the passing bell. To the call for a council of condolence a small tally stick is attached, the notches on which show the interval before the condolence occurs, a notch for a day.

The appointed time having come, the representatives of the nations gather for the ceremony. In old times the condoling brothers met at some distance from the town. When Sir William Johnson condoled the death of Kaghswughtioni, or Red Head, the Younger Brothers assembled a mile east of Onondaga, marching thence towards the village, singing the condoling song containing the names of the principal chiefs. In sight of the town they found

the mourning Onondagas, seated silently in a half moon across the road, beside a fire. The address was made, and the condoling song sung for another hour, when all marched forward to the town, the song being continued as the procession moved on. The full ceremony then lasted two days, but no chief was raised, nor was any installed when Conrad Weiser helped condole the death of Canassatego, at Onondaga, six years before.

In all the historic instances which have come to my notice, and in several of which I have personally known, the condoling brothers have come from the east, wherever the ceremony was performed. At this time there seemed no local reason for this, and geographically both the Senecas and Onondagas should have come to the Oneidas from the west. They did not, however, and we passed by the council-house, on our eastward way to the place of rendezvous. This seemed noteworthy to me, and I made it the subject of inquiry, but found it was not invariable. A few years before, the rendezvous had been at Aunt Cynthia Farmer's, about a mile due north. Twice afterwards it was near the public road, west of the council-house. It was a matter of convenience, no significance being attached to it, as I at first thought.

In this condolence the Onondagas and Senecas — no Mohawks being present — met by the roadside at noon, sitting on the rocks and fence in great good humor. They remained there until an Oneida runner came to find their names and number, cutting a notch on either side of a stick for each member of the two bands. This stick he bore to the Oneidas and Tuscaroras, and the procession soon moved forward, two and two, I falling into line with an Indian friend. The leaders marched with bowed heads, singing the great song containing the names of their ancient chiefs. Half way to the council-house the Younger Brothers were ranged on the east side of the wayside fire. There the songs were continued, addresses made, and the invitation wampum returned. Nearly the whole ceremony there was conducted by one Onondaga chief, speaking for each party in turn. He walked to and fro, in meandering lines, occasionally sitting down for a few moments on the one side or the other, as he represented mourners or condolers. At last the mourners moved forward, occupying the east end of the council-house. After a brief interval the condoling chiefs followed, singing as they went, and took the west end, all seating themselves except the Keeper of the Wampum, who continued the condoling song as before.

For one hundred and fifty years we have explicit mention of this song, by white men who heard it, as containing the names of the renowned ancestors of the later Iroquois. It is little more than a mere repetition of the names of the chiefs who formed the confederacy, with general words of praise and mourning, and occasional per-

sonal peculiarities. This one helped to form the Great League; that one did the same; they were brothers or cousins; and the whole song is of the simplest nature. None of the condoling songs are given precisely alike by different persons, but this one has probably changed least of all. The fact that there were always well known chiefs bearing the names contained in the song secured this from essential error, and thus we absolutely know who were those who formed the great Iroquois League three hundred years ago, what were their nations and their clans.

The prolonged sound of Hi-e-e-e, and Ha-e-e-e, dying out, was conspicuous in this song, which was long enough to occupy the brief march and half an hour's time in the council-house. It seems once to have been much longer. The chief sat down, and another rose and gave some orders. A cord was stretched from door to door across the house, and on this three quilts were hung for a curtain. A cane was laid across the benches of the Onondagas, and seven small bunches of wampum were hung upon this. The Onondagas faced each other, singing a solo and chorus, really fine but partly funny. The solo had much of the prolonged cadence of the great song of the names, and there was a little of this in the chorus, which was partly "Hai! hi-he-he-e-e-e. Wa-hah-ha-hě. O-yě!" with an odd and abrupt termination of "O-yes-o-dah-do-dah, O-ye-e-e-e — yě!" As yet the mourners were hid from view.

The curtain was then removed, and the Keeper of the Wampum began another long song. Others followed from La Fort, the wampum being carried to the Oneidas, a bunch at a time, and hung on a cane as before. The curtain was hung again, the Oneidas answering by proxy in the customary songs. The curtain was once more removed, and with speeches and songs the wampum was returned. Then the new chief was presented, his name announced, and his duties described.

For these official charges wampum is used, the details of the condolence varying. My deceased friend, Ga-haeh-da-seah, the Whirlwind, had a fine assortment of wampum, both official and private. Most of it was purple, suitable for mourning councils, but he had other appropriate strings. Ten long strings of white wampum embodied the pure moral law. Six long strings, united at one end, represented the Six Nations. When laid on a table, the ends meeting, these opened the council. Addresses were made to the nations on their appropriate strings; some had the name of the new chief; others mourned the old. The wampum belts do not appear at a condolence. It is also remarkable in this, that the turtle-shell rattles are not there used. It is not a religious ceremony, but an installation, the new chief taking only the official name.

W. M. Beauchamp.